

Reply to Office Action
Dated August 18, 2003

Appln. No. 09/890,484

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November 17, 2003

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated August 18, 2003. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Allowable Claims

Claims 1-18 are pending. Applicants acknowledge, with appreciation, that Claims 1-8 and 15-18 are allowed, and Claims 10-14 would be allowed if rewritten to include the recitations of their respective base claims and any intervening claims upon which they depend.

Objections and Rejections

Claims 9-14 are objected to due to formalities regarding the recitation of the membrane in the preamble. Claims 9-14 are rejected as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,274,286 to Gioia.

Claim Amendments

Applicants have amended Claim 9 by incorporating into it the subject matter of allowable Claim 10, Claim 10 being canceled. The dependency of Claim 11 has been amended from Claim 10 to Claim 9 to reflect the cancellation of Claim 10.

Applicants have further added new Claims 19 and 20, which are based upon Claims 9 and 10. No new matter has been added.

Information Disclosure Statements

Applicants note that Information Disclosure Statements were filed with the Patent Office on July 31, 2002 and January 17, 2002, but the Examiner has not indicated that the information items listed in these Statements were considered. The Examiner did acknowledge, in the Action, receipt of an IDS as Paper No. 5. Applicants request that the Examiner return initialed copies of the Form PTO-1449 of the Information

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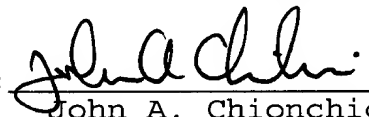
Disclosure Statements in a subsequent communication with the undersigned to verify that the information items were considered and will be listed on the cover sheet of any patent which may issue for this application.

Summary

Applicants believe that the claims, as amended overcome the rejections and objections of the Examiner and place the application in condition for allowance consistent with the Examiner's remarks. Applicants, therefore, request that the application be passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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Enclosure